

**ABSTRACT**

An improved thermal development apparatus is used to remove uncured photopolymer from the imaged surface of a flexographic printing element. The apparatus typically comprises one or more heatable rolls that are contactable with an imaged surface of a flexographic printing element; and means for maintaining contact between the one or more heatable rolls and the imaged surface of the flexographic printing element. The one or more heatable rolls are heated and is moved over at least a portion of the imaged surface of the flexographic printing element, and non-crosslinked polymer on the imaged surface of the flexographic printing element is melted and removed by the one or more heatable rolls.